

jovialtorchlight books
jovialtorchlight@gmail.com

The dog started her life with a dream,

A kicking pup,
eyes unopened to the
failing, gross world.

The dream played;

*a disease,
carried from the purple, bloated sky
and set into the blood,
an emptying of the streets,
so at twilight and dawn
unholy sound came down
settling into the cities like fog;*

*a braying of the beast,
sound carried down
from the high places
shaking down to dust the
fragile, withering frames of
all beings,
the roar that shakes the
ground,
reverberating,*

*toppling the dusty towers of
the construct of the self—*

*The lamb, bleating and
scared, cornered, fangs stuck
deep into the neck*

*and the pup could only
crawl away, legs unusable,
innocence laid
out in front of the beast,*

And the dreaming pup, barely
A week old

*crawled, hid in a place
unseen from the Terror*

*and the beast relented,
fading back into the darkness.*

After the dream,
A Good One took the tiny pup in their
palms,
Clutched the newborn dog to the chest
And said

*Can you see it moving across the
horizon?*

*It is the new God, unkind and sick,
lashing out at these cities and
piling the dead on the sidewalks--*

you will be safe, for a time.

And

the dog lived.

And grew.

Bringing Kindness
Into an unkind place.

Later, the world

Caught sick.

And after the fall,

The town
was on fire, caught up in a flash of
burning.

The smoke was breathless and
singed
The inside of his throat. Finally,
having
Crawled up the side of the hill, the
charred man
reached the crest,
And tired, with no drink, slumped
against
The blackened trunk of a tree.

He looked out
at the orange flames licking the horizon.
Bloated clouds of smoke, billowing
plumes.

Two men came from out from a small
ashed forest on top of hill, weeping,
clinging together, and he, the dying,
heard them
say how glad they were survived.

Breathing laboured, he glanced at his
Chest, bubbled, and his skin melted like
wax.

The men saw him, and thinking he
Was diseased, or cursed to have been
Burned, kicked him, hard, his skin
Torn like paper, and forced him down
The hill with the heel of their boots.

The fools showed him no kindness,
other than death.

He died on
His way down the hill, and he was
relieved.

The two, poets, or otherwise
Slobbering fools, laid down
On the singed hill where the flames
Could not reach and put themselves
down,
sleeping
As the heat remained below.
They knew

They were trapped, as both sides of the
Hill were on fire, and they had no water,
and
They wept, as if they had not just killed
another.

They slept, and wept, and held
themselves
Together, while slowly, the Terror
claimed them both.

When the Dog made her way into
town

After the flames had been
stopped by
rain, she knew there would be no
food,
and she thought it foolish to even
stop and
look.

But she saw the hill, and faintly
scented
two bodies untouched by the
flame.

She ascended the burned slope and
found the
man who had been kicked. She
paused, sniffed the
man, and found he hadn't been
innocent, and he
had been rooted firm in his own
construct, but
he was not some diseased thing,
some agent
of harm.

The dog thought that the kicked
man
would have made a fine master.

She continued up the hill, and found
the two
withered bodies of the fools. The
stench of
their sin was clear, now; petulant,
gross.

Who were they now?
corpses, like the rest of the town.
She could smell
the Terror. It had made a quick feast
of them, and
They had lashed out against each
other, kicking,
screaming, gnashing, until they
were consumed.

The kicked man had fought for a
brief flash, and
Was consumed, as the Dog also
soon would be.

She walked, for a few days, drinking
from foul
water when she could, eating
detritus littered,
Or the charred remains,
indistinguishable, that
fell about the roads, paths, and in
the woods.

It was hot during the day, so she
slept, dug out
a small hole, panting in her sleep.
She moved
at night.

Ash covered her body,
imprinted from sleeping and walking upon
the husk of earth.

After walking, she found a cabin, functional,
And she smelled an Alive. She took another
deep sniff and the wind told her that there
was
a woman, and a man and a child inside.

The child was close to death.

The man would die
within the hour, and the
woman would die
within the day. The opened
the door with her nose. The
man, on the floor, lifted his
head, but
Dropped it, breathing labored
and slow.
He could not sustain the effort
of breath.
Incompatible with life.

The child crawled to the Dog,
who crouched
down low to the ground, tail
wagging slowly.

The woman was asleep, and
did not notice.

The man, in a fit of energy,
rolled to his side.

He was burned, his flesh a
waxy melt, bubbling.

He looked to the Dog and
smiled. The Dog's

Slow tail swept, and the Dog
sent a message
to the Man.

The Man was a boy. Green was still
in the trees; the grass, and he sat
By a stream with his Grandfather.
His Grandfather handed him a candy,
And the boy took it; a caramel, and
cast the line of his fishing pole out
into the clear stream.

On the rotten floor, the burned
man closed his eyes,
and his breathing stopped.
The Dog thought he deserved
a kind death,
and so she delivered one onto him.

The Child was burned badly. The Child
dragged her torso across the floors,
incapable of walking,
debilitated by the flames.

The Dog knew there was no water in
the
cabin to drink.

The Child was delirious with thirst,
Of course, and the Dog could not help
in that way. The Dog knew the Child
would die.

She had seen many children die. None
of them

Ever deserved it, and they all died
because of the
petulance that came before them.

This Child, cursed
to die of burns and thirst in a cabin,
knew not of
The Terror, or had only a small
understanding of It,
a knowledge of the shadow that it
moved in and slithered
inside of
The Terror would claim her,
as claimed were all,
But at least the Dog
could help usher the child to the
gates.

A few hours passed, the Child still
resting on top of the Dog.

The Child stirred, and the Dog did
as well, emerging from a
Feverish dream, the same dream
the Dog always had since she was
a pup.

The Child
was going to die. The Child was
scared, crying for the Woman,
And the Dog knew that the Woman
had died in her sleep during the
Few hours that had passed.

So the Dog sent a message to the
Child.

The Child was riding a bike, and the
training wheels had just
been removed.

The Child wobbled, and fell over,
skinning her arm.
She cried.

In an instant, the Man and Woman
were upon her,
holding her, dressing the wound. The
pain ceased,
And her father lifted her high into
The air. She screamed in delight.

Surrounded by Family, the Child died.

The Dog took a deep sniff. The trace of
Alive
Was gone from the cabin. All had been
claimed.

She waited for the blaze of the Sun to
set
and moved through the scorched earth,
sniffing
For a trail to follow, some life. She found
a trail.

She followed and came upon the trail of
A Bad Man, full of sin,

dragging a sack of bodies
scraping the soot, towards a
place full of gross transgressions.
She followed the scent for an
hour before she came across
A group of tents.

A loud motor, rattled, brimming with
sludge.

She hid, black fur camouflaged in
the ashy, barren bush, as the
Bad Man emerged from a tent,
zipped it up, and, dripping with
sweat,

Reeking of blood, metallic and
sweet, hands painted red. He had
A gun strapped to his back. He went
towards the motor, pulled a
Man out from the bowels of the
human machine, and flung him into
the
dirt.

“WHERE IS IT?” the Bad Man bellowed.

She knew that the boy, barely called a
man, did not know.

She, from a distance, saw his fear, and
knew that
He would die.

The Bad Man stomped down on the boys
head
with his boot like
He was squashing a watermelon.

He took to violence as if born for it. He
cast a long,
Wretched shadow. Everything he
touched was made worse.

The Dog saw the Boy's light
go out in an instant.

The Bad Man climbed up on the motor, and shot
the gun.

The Dog was scared.

She wanted to run, far away from the Man,
Back across the soot, back to find someone
Alive.

But She
Stayed in the dirt, centered herself, and
remained.

Many
Alives emerged from tents; mostly bad, some
scared, some good.
The Bad Man spoke.

“ONE OF YOU FUCKERS HAS
SEEN IT.”

He grabbed a young woman from
the crowd, pulled her up.

“TELL ME OR SHE DIES.”

The Dog knew the Man was going
to kill the Girl, one of the Good.
He dug in with a pocket knife and
scraped across her cheek.

He punched her hard in the
stomach.

The Dog knew the girl
from a dream.

If the Girl died, there was no hope.
The dog allowed her body to tremble,
allowed herself to whimper,
Quietly, once.
After the tremble, she gathered herself
from the mind killer and leapt from the
bush.

The People had no guns. They did not
even see her until
She reached the side of the Motor;
the dog heard one
Gasp and she leapt
up the side; fangs bared;

A flash of fear in the Bad Man's eyes as the
Dog latched her teeth
Into the side of his face, scraping his skin
Like a chisel down to the bone; eye dangling;
the Man screamed,

The Girl ran
The People rushed to help
And the Dog ran after the Girl, unnoticed.

She followed the tracks of the Girl.
Wind had swept ash over her tracks,
Stifling out the scent. But the Dog kept the
Course. It was hot, as it always was,
But the sun was beginning to fall into
The sky.

The dog knew the Girl would have
To fall asleep soon.

The dog kept the trail.

The Girl fell into a dream. A
thousand people
pushing up against a fence, falling,
crushed by the piling on the other,
lungs caved and crushed.

The Girl. The black of night,
the small clearing in the bare pines. It
was cold,
and she shivered.

She gave up many things to live in
the camp
with the Bad Man.

She was a victim of him,
as were the rest of them,
and they kept each other,
they clung body to body
and kept each other from sickness,
but they could not keep
them from dying when the
Bad Man
wanted to kill.

She saw the eyes of the Dog, and
thought she would die from the
sinking of the fangs.

The wolves of the forest craved the
flesh.

The Dog did not. The Dog wanted
only
to help. The Girl was too weak to run.

As
the dog entered into the pale light of
the moon,
the girl saw it was no wolf,
then saw the blood of the Bad Man
caked on the Dog's fur.

As the girl sat, her breath felt
like a stone down
On the chest, labored,
thoughts
Taking wild turns, pangs of
sadness cut into the skin
Thoughts frantic
Wherever the brain skips,
wherever there is panic,
wherever the friend dies,
wherever the life goes when
the spirit sinks

where was she when the boy
died when she could not know
how much life was left how
much life is left how tight can the
chest constrict--

The Dog put her head in the
Girl's lap.

The panic subsided to a dull
throb.

The girl was near death,
but, perhaps they could make it
across the burnt fields,
Heading towards the dream.

But that thought was only
A saccharine distraction.
There, dying beside the tree,
no dreams
Only gasping awake,
No stomach unturned by guilt
No sleeping soundly.

Not to be absolved.

A thing to be carried.

And what did the Dog carry?

The weight of the festering past.

In the cursed past,
The world had just burst
Into flames.

Cities taken by the sweeping hot
winds,
Building like the heart attack of the
world,
Bringing all into death.

The dog had a master, a Man
And a woman,
And two children. Many were dying,
piled up
In the streets,
Oozing petulance from bloated
bodies.

The Man and his family took quickly
to the woods,
the last places untouched by flames.
The flames crept.

The Terror crouched low and
stalked.
First to die was the Child, a girl, full
of life.

The Man tightened his heart. He
became cruel and lashing, hurting.
Once,
The child, the Boy child was crying
and the Man slapped him, hard,
across the face.

He hit the woman and the Dog but

He hit the woman, the
Dog, but he kept them
alive,
away from the fires
racing across the
Horizon.

Cruelness took the man.
Hunger pangs
Led him to a strangle-
hold of the boy's neck,
Madness, rage, and
hatred.

The Dog tried to bite him,
Tried to free the Boy,
But the Man kicked the Dog in her teeth
And knocked her into a deep sleep.

In the Dog's dream,
She spoke to the man.

You say you will fight it.
You say
You have not yet been defeated,
said the Dog.

You say you will
Remain here. You
Say no act will uproot your soul.

*I have been watching you.
I have not left you. I have
Tried to help you.*

*It has not been easy
Many times I have felt
The terror race across the same sky.*

You lied to yourself. You lied to everyone.

*You merely thrashed against the terror.
you have only glimpsed it. Many
Have tried to help you.*

*But you lashed out against us. You
Let the terror transform you
Into the thing you said you would defeat.*

You are weak. You have already lost.

I am sorry.

I have to leave you.

*The terror will soon come,
And you will be destroyed.*

When the Dog awoke, there was no
trace of Alive.

The man had eaten his son.

Killed the Woman.

And the Dog, facing for the first time
a Death,
Marked her prey.

The Bad Man.

She followed him for many years,
waiting.

And that was the past the dog
carried.

Now,

The Girl awoke in the heat of the morning to
the sound of a motor rumbling, sputtering.

She tried to jump awake, but was weak from
thirst,

And fell back beside the tree.

The Dog woke.

Boots scraping across the ash, towards them.

She could

Smell the dry blood on his cheek, his shirt,
even his boots.

He could hear his eyeball slap against the
bone of his eye socket.

The Dog heard the Gun load.
The Dog leapt up towards
the Bad Man,
fangs again bared towards
her old master.

He fired as her teeth sank
into his skull and crushed
down into bone, ripping off
the side of his face.

The dog caught the bullet in her side, and
she bleed, her blood letting out the matted fur
of her body,
Mixing with his
as they both slowly faded into death

They were on the porch. It was a summer
day. Cicada songs sang out.
He threw the ball for her. She stopped, turned
to him, his face half gone,

And she asked

*How swift does a promise disappear
when faced with the Terror?*

He replied;

**Well, I promised to protect you. I
promised to be strong and pure and
I told you I would defeat the primal
destruction brewing inside of me. I
lost. Now it is the final hour.**

I was destroyed long ago.

**But now,
It is my final hour.**

I too will be destroyed.

*It is the weight of your
transgressions that brings this
ending. It did not have to be like
this, crushed and cursed, said the
Dog.*

And the man turned to his family.
His girl, head smashed in. His boy,
ripped apart and
Consumed. His wife.

**“I have spent my days
surrounded by decadence.
I have lived always for myself.
I have sacrificed little.**

**It is too late for me, this heaping
pile of gross sin, this bag of flesh
and petulance.**

**Maybe you could take a final ride
out; run against the bloated wind
sweeping across the horizon,
run against the pull of pain that
drew me into this life of anger
and fear.**

**You will not make it. You will be
claimed.**

**But you can try. You can be
better than I was.”**

*How convenient. What a kind
ending for you, said the dog. You
who stomped out the bright lights
Of so many. You who let yourself
become so bloated and gross with
skin. You get no
Quarter, even in death.*

The child, caved face, lept
With unholy speed and took a chunk
Of skin from the mans neck. The
mother,
Smashed, ripped apart the tendons
in his ankles
As if paper.

The boy
placed
a stone on the chest of the man.
stone on his chest.

Stone. Stone.

Gasping, his eyes filled with fear.
Fighting for breath. Limp, flailing.
Another stone. Crushing.

His innards splayed out like a popped
Balloon, a final Terror etched into his soul.

He died.

The Girl cradled the Dog, and tried
In vain to stop the blood with a scrap of
cloth.

The Dog opened one eye.

The Dog had been to many places. She
Had seen many things,
And she had ushered many people
Into death. People who did
Not deserve to die. And the Dog
Knew that she did not deserve death.

But as the weeping Girl cradled her,
The Dog knew that at least her Terror
would be fast, as swift
As destruction could be. No stone upon
the chest,
Only swift consumption.
And the Dog would not be alone for
death.

The Dog faded. The
before times. She
jumped off a dock and
Caught a frisbee
midair, plunging into
the cool
Untampered water.
The Girl laughed from
the dock.

The Dog died.

The Bad Man's car was still running. Flies
already were
Feasting on his corpse.

The Girl

Remembered how to drive.

She hoisted herself into the Jeep, still
weeping,

Salt pricking the open sores on her face.

She opened the center console,
And drank water.

There was enough stolen and piled water in
the back

Of the Jeep for a few days trip,
And enough food for a journey.

She drove back to the village,
And told them that the Bad Man
was dead.

They piled in the Jeep, and started
for the sea.

It wasn't a long journey. And
When they reached the sea,
It was a cool breeze,
The first time any of their faces
Felt anything but fire
For years.

They built a village,
And survived for a while.
The fish of the sea were not dead.
When the high water and the hurricanes
came
Some died. Every year.
And some died.
And some were born.
And some died.

Humans are chained by the Terror.
Even the fearless, in the final moment
Wither up when
Faced up against unwavering destruction.

END

